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February 9, 1970

## MEMORANDUM FOR

## THE ACTING SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

I am returning herewith your memorandum of February 9 pursuant to our telephonic conversation this afternoon. In taking this action, I draw your attention to the following:

1. The Washington Special Actions Group was established by the President in a memorandum dated May 16, 1969 in the aftermath of the EC-121 incident.
2. The directive stated that it was to deal with "future similar crises worldwide" and that "it will confine itself to the policies and plans involving crises."
3. Pursuant to this charter, the WSAG has met periodically under my chairmanship with the following other participants: the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. Alexis Johnson; Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Mr. Warren Nutter; the Director of the Joint Staff, Admiral Nels Johnson; and the Deputy Director for Plans - CIA, Mr. Paul Karamessines. The WSAG is, of course, totally within the NSC framework.
4. The WSAG has dealt with contingency plans on many subjects involving the integration of political and military factors. These plans are normally prepared by a working group chaired by the Department of State and containing representatives of the agencies represented in WSAG. A copy of these plans is kept in DOD and another in the Situation Room.
5. None of these plans are put forward as recommendations to the President, or go to him for that matter. They are kept on file until the President and his senior advisers decide that some military action is called for.

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6. The plans on the Middle East were drawn up in July with the full approval of the participating agencies. The purpose of the meeting this morning was to bring them up-to-date. If you read these plans you will find that they make no recommendation; they are entirely hypothetical. The meeting this morning was a normal precautionary procedure for crises that might develop. The President was fully aware of the meeting and its nature in advance; indeed he had requested it.

7. Before the President takes any action -- military or diplomatic -- his senior advisers will be consulted on the basis of a full consideration of the options under established procedures. WSAG's contingency plans would not be relevant until after a decision to take such action is taken and they would then be subject to full review.

8. The Department of Defense has the right to upgrade its membership on the WSAG. But the WSAG will continue to follow the procedures provided for under its charter until directed otherwise by the President.

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Henry A. Kissinger

Attachment

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~~SENSITIVE~~THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

9 February 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR Honorable Henry A. Kissinger  
Honorable Elliot L. Richardson

I am very concerned with the trend of the WSAG discussions on the Middle East. A matter of particular concern is that it appears that this group has given serious consideration to the thought that there may be a viable U.S. military course of action for the problems in this area. I think it is extremely important that the Middle East discussions be removed from the arena of the Special Actions Group and placed within the National Security Council structure through an early meeting of the Under Secretaries Committee on this subject.

There is every indication that the Special Actions Group's discussions have been inordinately concerned with military options of questionable feasibility and even more questionable contribution to U.S. national interests. I believe that primary attention should rather be focused on the political options available in the Middle East. One option that should be urgently considered is an embargo on arms shipments to the Middle East. I recognize that we have been unable to reach such an agreement with the Russians. At the same time, I believe that the Italian note of 6-7 February may provide a new basis for negotiating a mutual arms embargo on the part of both ourselves and the Soviet Union. In the absence of a mutual embargo, I believe that we should next consider the impact of a unilateral embargo in an attempt to reduce the escalating tensions in this area. It is clear that such an embargo could be considered either temporary or permanent as the facts may warrant and could be limited to offensive or offensive and defensive weapons as necessary.

I have briefly reviewed the various military contingency plans under consideration by the WSAG. I can only say that I view these plans with alarm. It is clear to me that any discussion of such options must take place within the organizational frame-

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work of the NSC. I strongly urge that these matters be withdrawn from the purview of the WSAG and be scheduled for an early meeting of the Under Secretaries Committee. In the meantime, I am reviewing all of the contingency plans contained in the WSAG working documents. Until this review is completed, none of these plans should be further considered by either the WSAG or the Under Secretaries Committee.

I stand ready to meet with the Under Secretaries Committee on the Middle East at your earliest convenience.



David Packard

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